

## Chapter One – The Beginning

The University of Santa Clara High School moved from the Santa Clara University campus to its new home on the old College of the Pacific campus in 1926. In 1928, to honor the soon to be canonized Blessed Robert Cardinal Bellarmine, the school's name was changed to Bellarmine College Preparatory. Within a few years of the move, the Great Depression hit.

“During the Great Depression, two organizations were formed at Bellarmine which kept up the courage of the Jesuit Pioneers at Bellarmine: The Mothers' Guild, founded in 1929, with Fr. Ivan Fabris as moderator, and the Dads' Club, organized in 1933 by Fr. McCann. Were it not for the valiant assistance of the Mothers' Guild and the Dads' Club, Bellarmine might have had to close its doors” (Fr. Charles Budde's Journal, Bellarmine Archives, Pg. 68)

## Chapter Two – Our Role Model, Sam Liccardo

Liccardo Center was dedicated in 1966 in honor of SAMUEL A. LICCARDO. Sam was not a major donor to Bellarmine nor did he give a lot of money to the facility named after him!

Sam was, for almost 30 years the unofficial, unpaid lay development director for Bellarmine. In essence the very first lay person who did fundraising for any of the then 48 Jesuit high schools.

In 1948 Sam's first son, Sal '52, later followed by Leonard '59, entered Bellarmine. The school was in dire need of money just to keep the doors open. Sam took it upon himself, as a member, and eventually President of the Dads' Club, to be the school's unofficial fundraiser. What he did was call the then sitting president (originally Fr. Sugrue but eventually eight more Presidents during his time at Bellarmine) and TELL the President that that afternoon that they were going to the San Joaquin Valley....Tracy, Merced, Modesto... even North sometimes to Napa, Sonoma, Healdsburg, from where many of our boarding students came. Some of those Presidents were not always so ready to go with him, but he “encouraged” them to go in his own gentle way.

With a list of the names and addresses of the parents of the boarding students in a particular destination area, a map, a flashlight and a roll of nickels (the then price of using a public telephone) Sam and the president would call a boarder parent and the conversation went something like this, “Hello, my name is Sam Liccardo and I am also a Bellarmine parent. I just happen to be in the area with Fr....., the president of the school. We would like to stop by and say hello”. Of course, they were welcomed and the President would talk about the student's progress and then Sam would close with an eloquent plea explaining the School's needs and before he left he had asked for a gift to

help cover the full cost of their son's education! Thus, the parent pledge program was born.

Sam continued to do this fundraising as well as work on many other of the School's fundraisers such as the Golden Bell Dinner (the precursor to the Golden Bell Auction) until 1977 when the school hired Ron Pine as its first compensated employee development director. Sam continued to mentor Ron and the other Presidents until he was well into his 90s. He passed away on February 18, 2000.

### Chapter Three – The Golden Bell Dinner and Auction

In 1953, there were some very prominent men and women who were parents of Bellarmine students who got together and produced an annual event, THE GOLDEN BELL DINNER AND DANCE, to benefit Bellarmine College Preparatory. The individuals, especially the dads, were prominent in the Santa Clara Valley, which was then known, and still remembered in the hearts and minds of many fortunate to have been born in this valley, as "The Valley of Heart's Delight" because of all the fruit that was grown and processed here.

The leaders of this event, along with their spouses were: Dr. Sal Campisi (current BDC President), Mr. Sal Sanfillipo (future BDC President), Mr. Sam Liccardo (former BDC President) and Mr. Bill Weston (future BDC President and who was also a teacher here at Bellarmine).

The Golden Bell Dinner and Dance continued until 1975. The mom's and dads used world destinations and exotic places as the theme for each event Italy, Spain, China, France, England, etc. The first ticket price to attend was \$50 per person, an unheard of price in those days for a charity event. Because of this "steep" price, the event quickly became a celebrity and society event for all of the Santa Clara Valley.

In those days, there were two Newspapers, the morning San Jose Mercury and the afternoon paper, The San Jose Mercury News (which in later years were combined into one daily edition, The San Jose Mercury News. These newspapers were hungry to report all society events of the day. If a group of mothers got together to have a card party such as Whist, (the precursor game of the day that was played before the start of Bridge) to raise a little money for the school, you could bet on the newspaper to print an article about it which carried with it a 6"-8" square picture of several women playing the game. That was the day when a newspaper really cared about the local events and considered its role and responsibility to promote local public relations events.

The Golden Bell Dinner and Dance was held in the "old gymnasium" which was located almost exactly where the present-day Wayne Valley Gymnasium stands. The "old Gym" was one of the original buildings that came with the purchase of the 17 ½ acre campus purchased from the University of Pacific that moved to Stockton in 1925. The Samuel A.

Liccardo Center was built and dedicated in 1965 and the Center became the new venue for the Golden Bell Dinner and Dance. The Dads' Club would set up a tent outside the old gym and prepared the meal, for which the entree' was always barbequed steak.

All of the theme decorations were designed and created by the parents and it took several months to do it. This created some interference with the student programs at the time because everything was mostly done on campus. Jesuit priests, scholastics and parents were the waiters and bartenders. But, everyone understood the need for the event. Some of the event profits were used just to keep the operation of the school going and some of it was used to provide tuition/scholarship aid for needy students.

While we do not have records of how much the event raised each year, we do know that the last year it was held, 1975, it netted about \$6000. Fr. Bob Mathewson, S.J., who had been principal for the previous 9 years, had just then been appointed the promoted to be president of the school;. With some encouragement by the parents who wanted to find other ways to help the school raise desperately needed revenue, the Golden Bell Dinner Dance was replaced in 1976 by a Casino Night, chaired by parents of 4 Bellarmine graduates, Mel '49 and Lorna Micheletti. They were both President of the Dad's Club and Mothers' Guild respectively. The event raised some \$15,000-\$20,000, a significant improvement over the later years' net income from the Dinner and Dance. In spite of the significant additional help for the school, there were some parents and especially parents of alumni that had been important and integral to the "old" Golden Bell Dinner and Dance successes that were upset with the replacement of the Golden Bell. One of these parents of alumni was Sam Liccardo!

During these changing times, Fr. Bob Mathewson, S.J. was being strongly urged by Fr. Pat Cahalan, S.J., a graduate of Bellarmine, Class of 1952 and president of Loyola High school in Los Angeles, to initiate an auction which had proven itself to be a more successful fundraising and friend-raising event. Loyola High School in Los Angeles was then into it's third year of doing one, an event that had been created and established by another Jesuit High School several years earlier, Loyola Academy at Wilmette, a suburb of Chicago. So, the Casino Night was replaced the next year, 1977, with the auction which continues today in almost the identical format as when it was started.

Wanting to sooth the feelings of those parents and parents of alumni who had for so many years been an integral part of the establishment and successes of the almost 25 year run of the Golden Bell Dinner and Dance format, it was decided to call the new auction event, The GOLDEN BELL DINNER AND AUCTION in order to "transition" the past with the future! The first Golden Bell Dinner and Auction netted \$76,000!

Parenthetically, Sam Liccardo did not attend the Casino Night because of his concern that a new event would not benefit the school! And, did not agree with the changes! When the Golden Bell Dinner and Auction was announced as the new fundraiser, Sam did not plan to attend this event either. There were 192 parents, alumni and friends

who attended the first Golden Bell Dinner and Auction and Sam Liccardo was one of them. Before the event, President Fr. Bob Mathewson, S.J. visited Sam at his home and urged him to attend. Fr. Mathewson explained that while Sam's attending or not attending was not going to make the success or failure of the event, Sam himself was "watched" by many of the "old-timers" and his attending would be a sign to others of the need for change and would make it easier for others to accept. Sam agreed and attended the Golden Bell Dinner and Auction. Sam never missed another Golden Bell until the early nineties when his health began to fail. Sam was a believer in the success of the Golden Bell Dinner and Auction as a friend raiser and fundraiser!! Le Grand Golden Bell Dinner and Auction netted \$1.2 million dollars in 2007 for financial aid and campus improvements!

#### Chapter 4

For over 45 years, Dads' Club members, often in conjunction with the Mothers' Guild, helped spearhead the fund raising activities of Bellarmine College Prep. During the 1930s and early 1940s, most of their efforts were about keeping the doors open, and using sweat equity to improve the school, like digging the original swimming pool on campus. Later their activities focused on capital improvements such as the Senior-Junior wing of Old Town (completed in the late 1940s at a cost of \$232,000), the Jesuit residence (completed in 1954 at a cost of \$400,000), the Frosh-Soph wing of Old Town (completed in 1958 at a cost of more than \$500,000), the Liccardo Student's Center (completed in 1965 at a cost of \$840,000) and O'Donnell Hall Dormitory (completed in 1966 at a cost of close to \$1,000,000).

One of the last major fund raising activities led by Dads' Club members was the construction of the new gymnasium. In 1975, Fr. Mathewson appointed an advisory committee headed up by Roland Mangiantini, President of the Dads' Club, to begin plans for the new gym. Eventually, \$1,100,000 was raised for the gym, but more significantly, that advisory committee became the forerunner of the future Board of Regents, established in 1977. Roland Mangiantini, Mel Micheletti, and Rodney Martin, all former Dads' Club Presidents, and John deRegt, Lou Rosendin, and Paul Wattis, members of the Dads' Club, were members of the original Board of Regents.